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(71) Applicant(s)
Owens-Illinois Closure Inc.

(72) Inventor(s)
Steven R. Wolfe; James G. Mierzwak

(74) Agent/Attorney
BALDWIN SHELSTON WATERS, Level 21, 60 Margaret Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000

(56) Related Art
US 5505326
US 5797506
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COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
FOR A STANDARD PATENT
ORIGINAL

Name of Applicant/s: Owens-Illinois Closure Inc

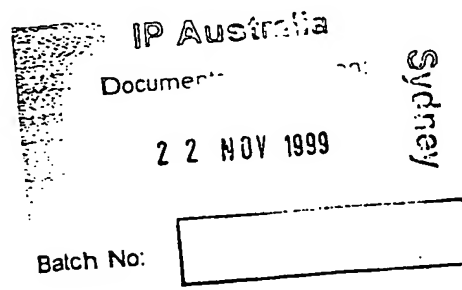
Actual Inventor/s: Steven R. Wolfe and James G. Mierzwik

Address for Service: BALDWIN SHELSTON WATERS
60 MARGARET STREET
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Invention Title: 'PIERCE AND CUT CLOSURE'

The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it known to me/us:-

File: 26128AUP00



ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A cut and pierce closure (12) molded from a rigid plastic material for a container (10) whose open mouth is normally sealed by a thin membrane (26) applied to a rim (28) of the container (10). The closure is removably applied to the container in a closing orientation by interengaging helical threads (16, 18) on the exterior of a neck (14) of the container and an annular skirt (22) of the closure. To dispense the contents of the container (10), the closure is removed and reapplied in an inverted orientation, a flange extension of the closure skirt surrounding the rim of the container and serving to center the closure in its inverted orientation on the container. A top panel (20) of the closure is provided with a double-ended arcuate shoulder (32) that engages the membrane when the closure is in its inverted orientation on the container to maintain tension in the portion of the membrane in engagement with the shoulder. The arcuate shoulder also serves, in combination with the flange extension, to trap the rim of the container therebetween. A sharp cutting element (34) projects axially from the shoulder at a location between its ends and functions to pierce the membrane when the closure is reapplied, in its inverted orientation, to the container. When the closure is rotated on the container in the inverted orientation, the cutting element will cut the membrane along an arc of less than 360° even if the closure is rotated 360° or more, to thereby permit dispensing of the contents of the container after removal of the closure from the container while ensuring that the severed membrane remains affixed to the rim of the container without dropping into the contents of the container.

PIERCE AND CUT CLOSURE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a closure for application to a bottle or other container
5 whose mouth is normally closed and sealed by a thin membrane of a metallic foil or the
like, the closure being removably applied to the container after the membrane is applied
thereto. More particularly, this invention relates to a closure of the foregoing character
that is provided with a cutting element which, when the closure is removed from its
closing position on the container and reapplied to the container in an inverted
10 orientation, will pierce the membrane that seals the mouth of the container to permit
dispensing of the contents of the container.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Any discussion of the prior art throughout the specification should in no way be
15 considered as an admission that such prior art is widely known or forms part of common
general knowledge in the field.

Many products are packaged in bottles or other containers whose mouths are
sealed by a thin membrane of a suitable material, such as a metallic foil or a plastic film,
until a consumer or other user is ready to remove the contents of the container for
20 consumption or use after piercing of the sealing membrane. Various types of infant
formula are packaged in this manner. In addition to the membrane that seals the mouth
of such a container, it is also customary to apply a removable molded plastic closure to
the container to protect the membrane from damage during shipment and storage of the
filled container and to re-close the container after partial removal of its contents, the
25 membrane no longer serving to seal the container at this time due to its piercing.
Typically, in such a packaging application the piercing of the membrane is accomplished
by one or more piercing elements on the top of the closure after removing the closure
and reapplying it to the container in an inverted orientation. U.S. Patents 5,709,311
(Butler et al.), 5,505,326 (Junko), and 5,090,582 (Art et al.) describe closures of this
general type.

Piercing closures of the type described are also used to cut the membrane through
an arc of substantial extent, often 360°, by turning the closure on the container, after



inverting the closure on the container. Unfortunately, the quality of this cutting action often degrades as the length of the cut increases, due to a loss in the tension in the membrane as the cutting action proceeds. This problem makes it difficult to properly
5 remove the contents of the container, with resultant aggravation of the user or consumer and loss of good will of the manufacturer whose product is packaged in the container.

It is an object of the present invention to overcome or ameliorate at least one of the disadvantages of the prior art, or to provide a useful alternative.

10 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect, the invention provides a closure for application to a mouth of a container, the container being sealed by a thin, severable membrane applied to a rim at the mouth of the container and having closure engaging means projecting outwardly from a neck portion of the container at a location below the rim for permitting
15 the closure to be removeably attached to the container, the closure comprising:

an annular skirt having first and second annular ends;

a planar top panel member within said annular skirt and extending
perpendicularly with respect to said annular skirt;

container engaging means projecting inwardly from said annular skirt at a
20 location between said first annular end and said top panel member for engaging the closure engaging means of the container; and

thin film severing means projecting perpendicularly from said top panel member toward said second annular end of said annular skirt, said thin film severing means being spaced inwardly from said annular skirt and comprising;

25 an arcuate shoulder having an arcuate extent of less than 360° for engaging the thin, severable membrane on the container when the closure is applied to the container with the film severing means facing toward an interior of the container, said arcuate shoulder being adapted to tighten a portion of the thin, severable membrane in engagement therewith, and

30 a sharp cutting element projecting axially outwardly from said arcuate shoulder at a location between opposed ends of said arcuate shoulder;

said closure being freely rotatable with respect to the mouth of the container when said closure is applied to the mouth of the container with said thin film severing



means facing toward the interior of the container with the rim of the container centered between said arcuate shoulder and said annular skirt to permit the sharp cutting element to pierce and cut the thin, severable membrane when said closure is rotated with respect to the mouth of the container.

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, throughout the description and the claims, the words 'comprise', 'comprising', and the like are to be construed in an inclusive sense as opposed to an exclusive or exhaustive sense; that is to say, in the sense of "including, but not limited to".

According to a second aspect, the invention provides a package comprising, in combination:

a container having a rim defining a mouth at an open end and having closure engaging means projecting outwardly from a neck portion circumscribing said mouth for permitting a closure to be removably attached to said container;

a thin, severable membrane sealingly applied to said rim of said container; and
a closure removably applied to said container, said closure comprising;

an annular skirt having first and second annular ends,

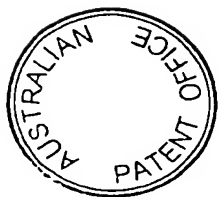
a planar top panel within said annular skirt and extending perpendicularly with respect to said annular skirt,

container engaging means projecting inwardly from said annular skirt at a location between said first annular end and said planar top panel member and removeably engaging said closure engaging means of said container, and

membrane severing means projecting perpendicularly from said planar top panel member toward said second annular end, said film severing means being spaced radially inwardly from said annular skirt portion and comprising,

an arcuate shoulder having an arcuate extent of less than 360° for engaging the thin, severable membrane on said container when said closure is applied to said container with said film severing means facing toward an interior of said container, said arcuate shoulder being adapted to tighten a portion of the thin, severable membrane in engagement therewith, and

a sharp cutting element projecting axially outwardly from said arcuate shoulder at a location between opposed ends of said arcuate shoulder;



said closure being freely rotatable with respect to said mouth of said container when said closure is applied to said mouth of said container with said film severing means facing toward the interior of said container with the rim of said container centered between said arcuate shoulder and said annular skirt to permit said sharp cutting element to pierce and cut said thin, severable membrane when said closure is rotated with respect to said mouth of said container.

Preferably, the closure of this invention has, on its upper surface in the normal orientation of the closure on the container, an upwardly projecting flange, which is positioned to closely surround the mouth of the associated container when the closure is reapplied to the container in an inverted orientation, an arcuate shoulder, which is positioned radially inwardly of the flange to be closely positioned to the interior of the mouth of the container, and a piercing and cutting element that projects upwardly from the shoulder and extends over a somewhat smaller arc. To gain access to the contents of the container through the membrane, the closure is removed from the container, for example, by unscrewing it, and is then reapplied to the container in an inverted orientation with the rim of the container that surrounds its mouth being trapped between the flange surrounding the upper surface of the container and the arcuate shoulder. Advantageously, this will cause the piercing and cutting element to pierce the membrane and will cause the arcuate shoulder to snugly engage the portion of the membrane therebelow to put tension therein. More, advantageously, rotation of the closure on the container, while the closure is in its inverted orientation, will cause the cutting and piercing element to cut the membrane along an arc that is concentric with and close to the interior of the container mouth. Advantageously, during this cutting action, the shoulder in the top of the closure maintains suitable tension for cutting in the membrane for most of an arc of 360°, notwithstanding gradual loss in tension in the membrane as the cutting action proceeds. However, preferably, near the end of the cutting arc, the tension in the membrane is so low, notwithstanding engagement by the shoulder at the top of the closure, that no further cutting action occurs. Thus, advantageously, the membrane never totally detaches from the container mouth even if the closure is rotated by more than 360° while in its inverted orientation on the container, and the shoulder of the closure will simply ensure that the membrane is securely folded against the interior of the container for the final, minor portion of the double-ended arc along which it is cut.



Advantageously, the present invention, at least in a preferred form provides an improved closure of the piercing and cutting type for a container with a membrane-sealed mouth. More advantageously, the present invention provides a closure of the aforesaid type in which the cutting action of the membrane by the closure proceeds smoothly over an arc of somewhat less than 360° by an action in which the closure is turned at least 360° on the container during the cutting action. Advantageously, the present invention at least in a preferred form, provides a package that is made up of a container with a membrane-sealed mouth that is normally closed by a removable closure of the aforesaid type.

Advantageously, the invention, at least in a preferred form provides that the cutting of the membrane which seals the mouth of the container not extend over an arc of 360° , so that the severed membrane will remain attached to the container and not drop into its contents.

For a further understanding of the present invention and the objects thereof, attention is directed to the drawing and the following brief description thereof, to the detailed description of the preferred embodiment and to the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

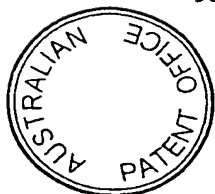
A preferred embodiment of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a container with a closure according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention removably applied thereto;

Fig. 2 is an elevation view, partly in cross-section and at an enlarged scale, of the closure shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a fragmentary cross-sectional view, at an enlarged scale, of the container and closure shown in Fig. 1 in the normal closing orientation of the closure on the container; and

Fig. 4 is a view like Fig. 3 but with the closure applied in an inverted orientation on the container to demonstrate the piercing action of a membrane sealing the mouth of the container by the closure in such orientation.

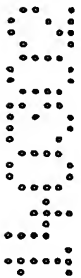
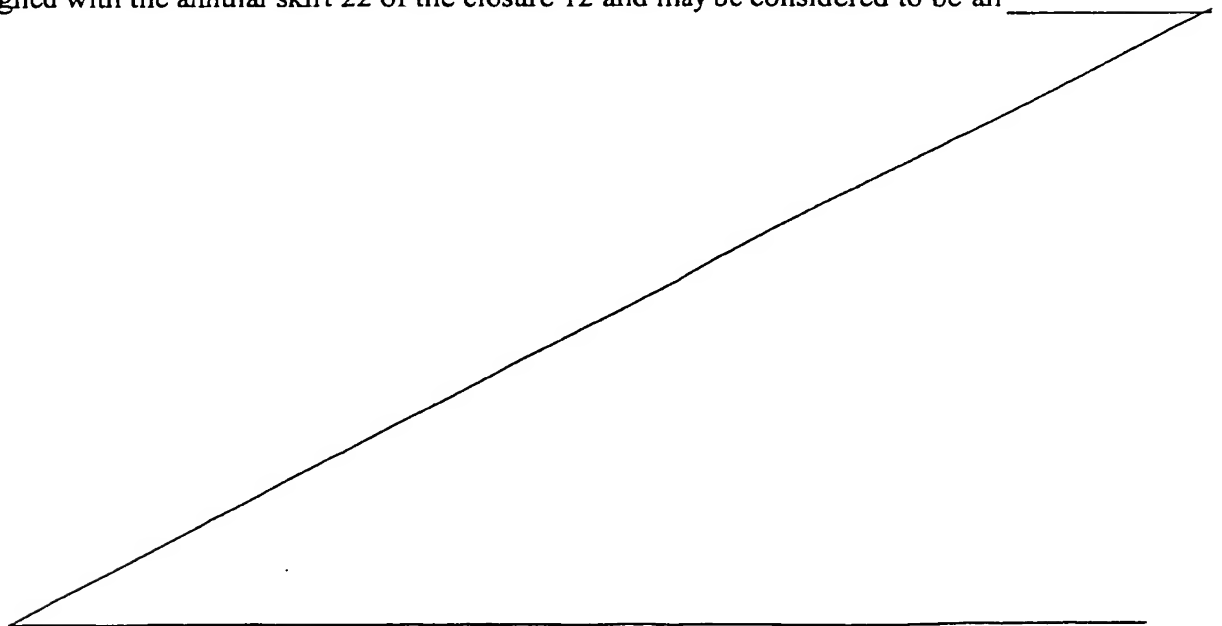


DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Fig. 1 illustrates a container 10, which may be considered to be a molded plastic bottle or any other type of container that may be removably closed by a separate closure, with a closure 12 releasably applied to a neck portion 14 (Fig. 3) of the container 10, for example, by a threaded connection between an internal helical thread 16 of the closure 12 and an external helical thread 18 on the neck 14 of the container 10. The closure 12, in its normal orientation on the container 10, has a top panel 20 and an annular skirt 22 that depends from the periphery of the top panel 20, the helical thread 16 projecting inwardly from the annular skirt 22 to engage the external helical thread 18 of the container 10.

As is shown in Fig. 3, an open mouth portion 24 of the container 10, which is the portion surrounded by the neck portion 14, is sealed after the filling of the container 10 by a thin membrane 26, such as a foil film, which is sealingly applied in a circumferential pattern to a rim 28 at a free end of the neck portion 14 of the container 10. In the closing position of the closure 12 on the container 10, as shown in Fig. 3, the underside of the top panel 20 on the closure 12 seats against the top of the membrane 26.

The closure 12 also has, extending upwardly from the top panel 20 in the orientation shown in Figs. 1-3, a perimetrical flange 30, which is generally axially aligned with the annular skirt 22 of the closure 12 and may be considered to be an

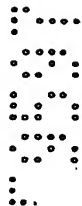


extension thereof. The flange 30 is positioned to closely surround the rim 28 of the neck portion 14 of the container 10 when the closure 12 is removed from the container 10 and reapplied in an inverted orientation, as shown in Fig. 4. The closure 12 also has an arcuate shoulder 32 extending upwardly from the top panel 20 of the closure 12, at a location radially inwardly of the flange 30, and the rim 28 of the neck portion 14 of the container 10 is trapped between the arcuate shoulder 32 and the flange 30 when the closure 12 is reapplied to the container 10 in the inverted orientation of the closure 12.

The closure 12 is also provided with a sharp cutting element 34 that projects upwardly from a central portion of the arcuate shoulder 32, but over a much smaller arc. The cutting element 34 pierces the membrane 26 when the closure 12 is reapplied to the container 10 in the inverted orientation of the closure 12, as shown in Fig. 4. From the position of the closure on the container 10 that is shown in Fig. 4, the closure 12 is then rotated on the container 10, preferably over an arc of at least 360°. This will cause the cutting element 34 to cut the membrane 26 in an arcuate pattern, the membrane 26 being held in tension by contact with the arcuate shoulder 32 through almost all of an arc of 360°, notwithstanding a loss in tension in the membrane 26 as the cutting action proceeds. However, near the end of a 360° cut in the membrane 26, the tension in the membrane 26 will be so relaxed that no further cutting of the membrane 26 will occur notwithstanding the presence of the arcuate shoulder 32 and any further rotation of the closure 12 on the container 10 in the inverted orientation of the closure 12.

The closure 12 is preferably formed in its illustrated, complex configuration integrally in a single piece from a suitable rigid thermoplastic material, such as polypropylene, by a suitable molding process, for example, by injection molding.

5 Although the best mode contemplated by the inventors for carrying out the present invention as of the filing date hereof has been shown and described herein, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that suitable modifications, variations and equivalents may be made without departing from the scope of the invention, such scope being limited solely by the terms of the following claims and the legal
10 equivalents thereof.



THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

1. A closure for application to a mouth of a container, the container being sealed by
5 a thin, severable membrane applied to a rim at the mouth of the container and having
closure engaging means projecting outwardly from a neck portion of the container at a
location below the rim for permitting the closure to be removeably attached to the
container, the closure comprising:
- an annular skirt having first and second annular ends;
- 10 a planar top panel member within said annular skirt and extending
perpendicularly with respect to said annular skirt;
- container engaging means projecting inwardly from said annular skirt at a
location between said first annular end and said top panel member for engaging the
closure engaging means of the container; and
- 15 thin film severing means projecting perpendicularly from said top panel member
toward said second annular end of said annular skirt, said thin film severing means being
spaced inwardly from said annular skirt and comprising:
- an arcuate shoulder having an arcuate extent of less than 360° for
engaging the thin, severable membrane on the container when the closure is applied to
20 the container with the film severing means facing toward an interior of the container,
said arcuate shoulder being adapted to tighten a portion of the thin, severable membrane
in engagement therewith, and
- a sharp cutting element projecting axially outwardly from said arcuate
shoulder at a location between opposed ends of said arcuate shoulder;
- 25 said closure being freely rotatable with respect to the mouth of the container
when said closure is applied to the mouth of the container with said thin film severing
means facing toward the interior of the container with the rim of the container centered
between said arcuate shoulder and said annular skirt to permit the sharp cutting element
to pierce and cut the thin, severable membrane when said closure is rotated with respect
30 to the mouth of the container.
2. A closure according to claim 1 wherein said closure is manufactured in a single
piece from a rigid thermoplastic material by molding.



3. A closure according to claim 2 wherein said rigid thermoplastic material is comprised mainly of polypropylene.

4. A closure according to claim 1 wherein the container engaging means of said
5 closure is a helical thread.

5. A package comprising, in combination:

a container having a rim defining a mouth at an open end and having closure engaging means projecting outwardly from a neck portion circumscribing said mouth for permitting a closure to be removably attached to said container;

10 a thin, severable membrane sealingly applied to said rim of said container; and

a closure removably applied to said container, said closure comprising;

an annular skirt having first and second annular ends,

a planar top panel within said annular skirt and extending perpendicularly with respect to said annular skirt,

15 container engaging means projecting inwardly from said annular skirt at a location between said first annular end and said planar top panel member and removeably engaging said closure engaging means of said container, and

membrane severing means projecting perpendicularly from said planar top panel member toward said second annular end, said film severing means being spaced radially

20 inwardly from said annular skirt portion and comprising,

an arcuate shoulder having an arcuate extent of less than 360° for engaging the thin, severable membrane on said container when said closure is applied to said container with said film severing means facing toward an interior of said container, said arcuate shoulder being adapted to tighten a portion of the thin, severable membrane

25 in engagement therewith, and

a sharp cutting element projecting axially outwardly from said arcuate shoulder at a location between opposed ends of said arcuate shoulder;

said closure being freely rotatable with respect to said mouth of said container when said closure is applied to said mouth of said container with said film

30 severing means facing toward the interior of said container with the rim of said container centered between said arcuate shoulder and said annular skirt to permit said sharp cutting

element to pierce and cut said thin, severable membrane when said closure is rotated

with respect to said mouth of said container.



6. A package according to claim 5 wherein said closure is manufactured in a single piece from a rigid thermoplastic material by molding.

7. A package according to claim 6 wherein said rigid thermoplastic material is
5 comprised mainly of polypropylene.

8. A package according to claim 5 wherein said closure engaging means of said container comprises a helical thread, and wherein said container engaging means of said closure comprises a helical thread.

9. A package according to claim 5 wherein said thin, severable membrane
10 comprises a metallic foil.

10. A closure for application to the mouth of a container substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the embodiments of the invention illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

11. A package substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the
15 embodiments of the invention illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

DATED this 14th Day of March, 2002

OWENS-ILLINOIS CLOSURE INC.

Attorney: STUART M. SMITH
Fellow Institute of Patent Attorneys of Australia
of BALDWIN SHELSTON WATERS

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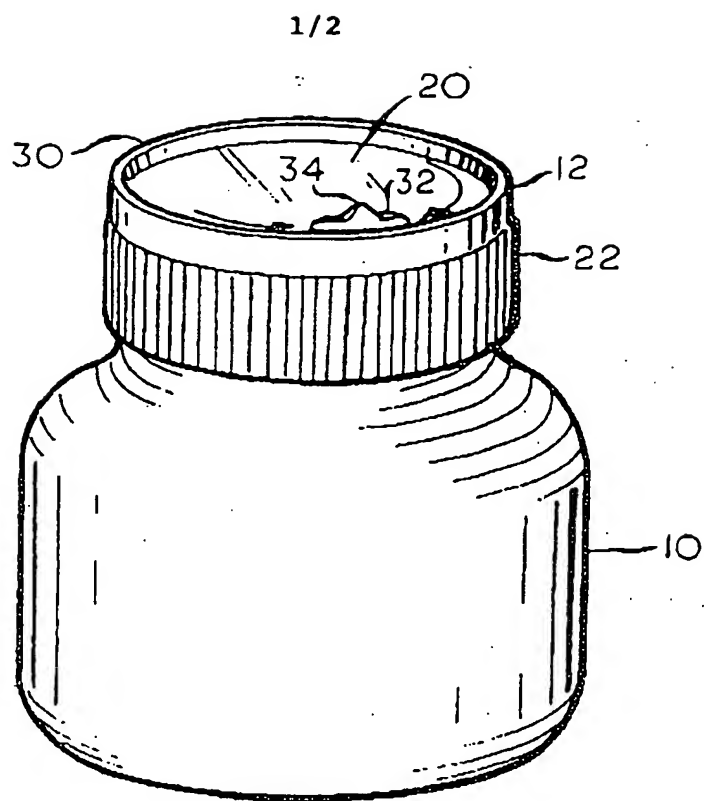


FIG. 1

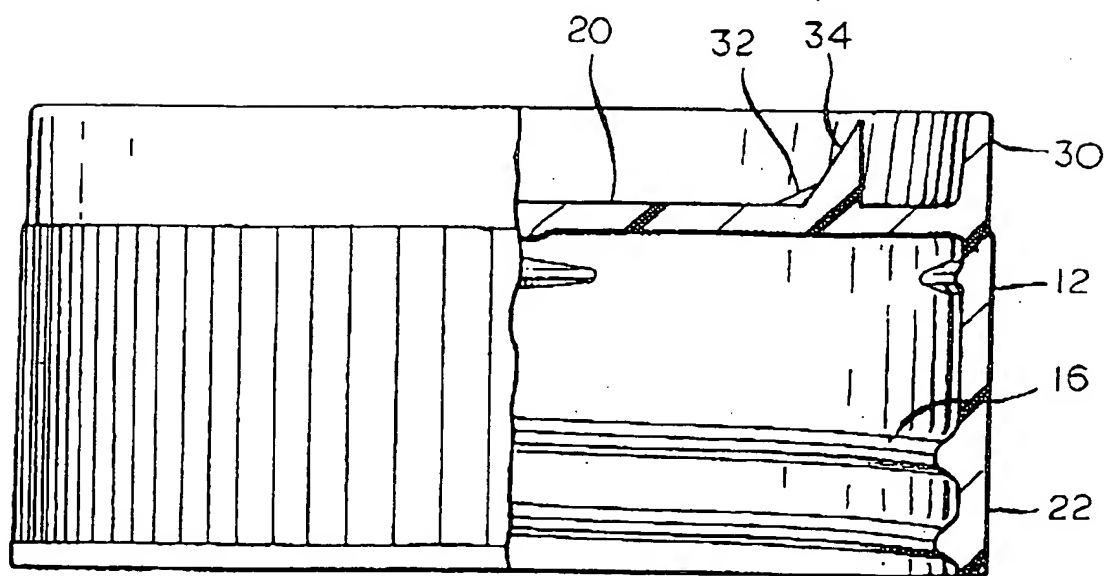


FIG. 2

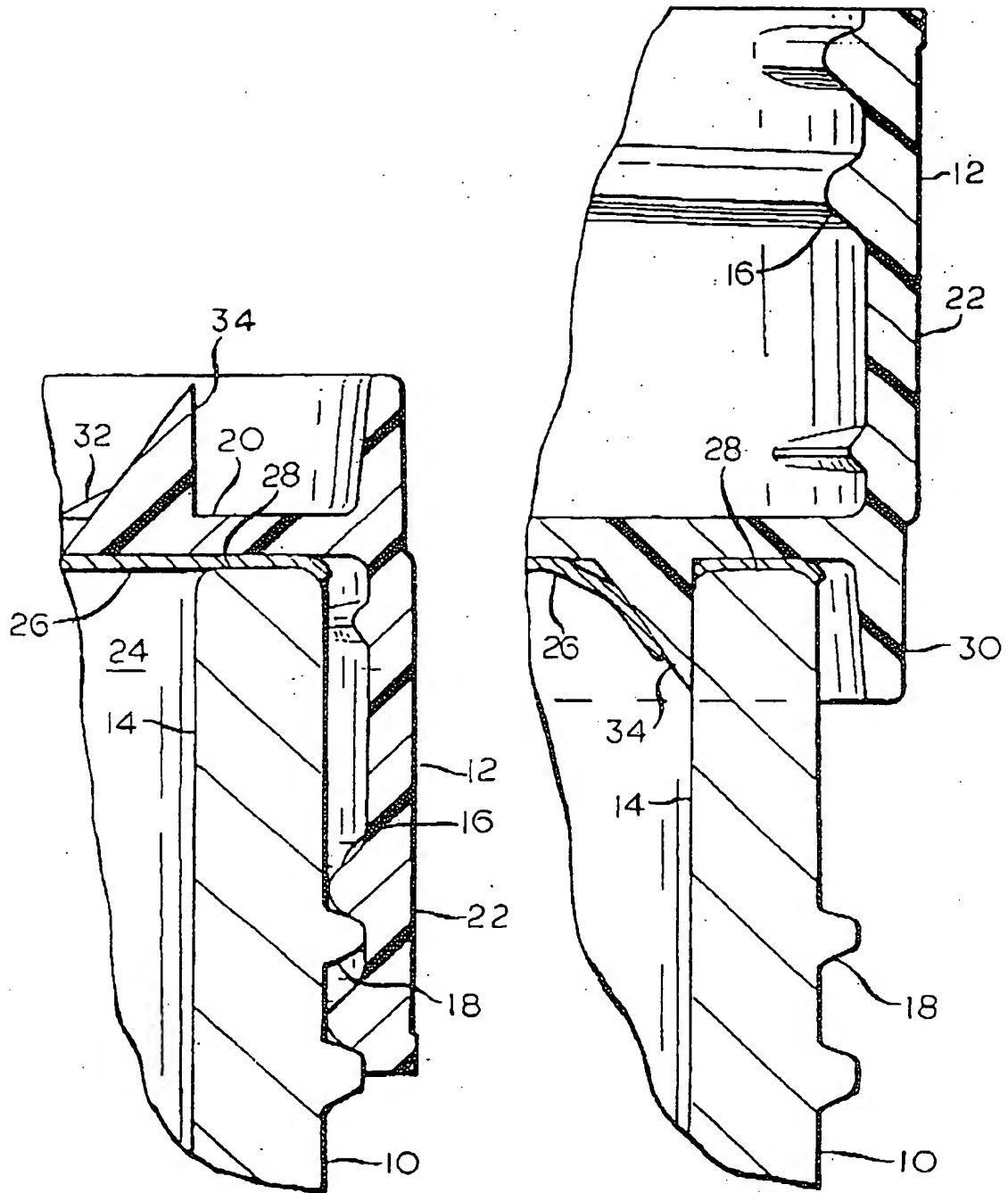


FIG. 3

FIG. 4